



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## President Shelly meets with FCC regarding NTUA Wireless



*Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly traveled to Washington, D.C. last week and met with the Federal Communications Commission regarding the designation of NTUA Wireless as a limited eligible telecommunications provider on the Nation. He met with Geoffrey Blackwell, Chief of the FCC Office of Native Affairs and Policy. (Photo by Jared King)*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Providing affordable mobile communications on the Navajo Nation is a challenge. Navajo people now have another wireless provider to choose from for services.

Last week, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. regarding Navajo Tribal Utility Authority Wireless, LLC and telecommunications on the Nation.

Telecommunications is an

important component of the five pillars of nation building for the Shelly-Jim administration, specifically with regard to infrastructure development.

The FCC issued an order on Feb. 18, 2014, designating NTUA Wireless as an eligible telecommunications carrier on the Navajo Nation.

NTUA Wireless' designation as a limited ETC for Lifeline Service and conditional ETC status to participate in Tribal Mobility Fund Phase I is another major step toward connectivity

in rural parts of the Nation.

The ETC designation was an exercise in Navajo sovereignty, especially with regard to jurisdictional authority.

President Shelly lauded the designation and the efforts of Brian Tagaban, executive director of the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission for their work with the FCC.

"Telecommunications and technology is our priority," said President Shelly, who championed broadband as vice

president. "We dedicated our efforts and formed a broadband team, that worked to completion, creating a middle and last mile network for the future."

The FCC order stated "NTUA Wireless is Navajo owned and submits to the jurisdiction over its operations by the NNTRC. Therefore, we find that NTUA Wireless is a tribally-owned commercial mobile radio service provider subject to the laws and jurisdiction of the tribal authority of the Navajo Nation."

"The NNTRC is specifically



named in the order as the regulatory oversight and sets precedence for other telecommunications companies to be regulated by the Nation. This is a big step for us to be a true regulator,” Tagaban said.

The NNTRC’s mission is to regulate the telecommunications industry on the Navajo Nation. It is committed to the protection of the public welfare, regulation and security of tribal telecommunications.

Tagaban said NTUA Wireless is a mobile wireless carrier that has committed to being regulated by the NNTRC.

“The Navajo Nation has committed to a mobile market that is competitive under a regulatory oversight,” he said. “All other phone companies or carriers like Frontier, Sacred Wind and Cellular One get their ETC designation from the state utility commission.”

Only the FCC and state utility commissions are authorized to designate phone companies with ETC status. For the Navajo Nation, the ETC designation of NTUA Wireless began in March 2011, two-months after the Shelly-Jim administration took office.

NTUA Wireless is a for-profit entity and is 51 percent owned by NTUA. Commnet, a wholly owned company of Atlantic Tele-Network, Inc., owns the remaining 49 percent. Atlantic Tele-Network has more than \$900 million in investment capital.

Tagaban noted that NTUA Wireless is an example of mitigating risk while bringing capital and expertise to the Navajo Nation.

The FCC order also recognized the exterior boundaries of the Navajo Nation and is significant because the checkerboard area of the Nation has been included for service.

“We are committed to a fair market for telecommunication providers in order for the people of the Navajo Nation to have a

choice,” Tagaban said.

“Owning and operating critical communications infrastructure empowers tribal nations to protect the health and safety of consumers living on tribal lands, to spur local economic development, to preserve tribal language and culture, and to further the education of residents through federal distance education programs,” the FCC stated.

The Communications Act of 1934 as amended, provided that, “Only an eligible telecommunications carrier designated under section 214(e) shall be eligible to receive specific federal universal support.”

“This was not easy, nor was it short. Once again, the Navajo Nation has helped the FCC forge some new ground here,” said Geoffrey Blackwell, chief of the FCC Office of Native Affairs and Policy.

Blackwell thanked President Shelly for his assistance and patience with the process.

He expressed hope for other government bureaus to understand the complexities of the effort, which included the Jeddito chapter area.

“Our door at the FCC is always open. Brian (Tagaban) and other folks know they can always reach out to us for issues on the Navajo Nation,” Blackwell said.

-30-



*Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and Vice President Rex Lee Jim traveled to Capitol Hill last week to share concerns from the Navajo Nation with federal officials and congressional members. (Photo by Jared King)*



*Clara Pratt, executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office joined President Shelly and Brian Tagaban in a meeting with the FCC last week in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Jared King)*



*Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, along with Brian Tagaban, executive director of the Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Commission and Deswood Tome, special advisor to the president, spoke with FCC Chief Geoffrey Blackwell on Feb. 18, 2014 about the NTUA Wireless designation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)*